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Voices from Michigan's Black River: Obtaining Information on "Special Places" for Natural Resource Planning

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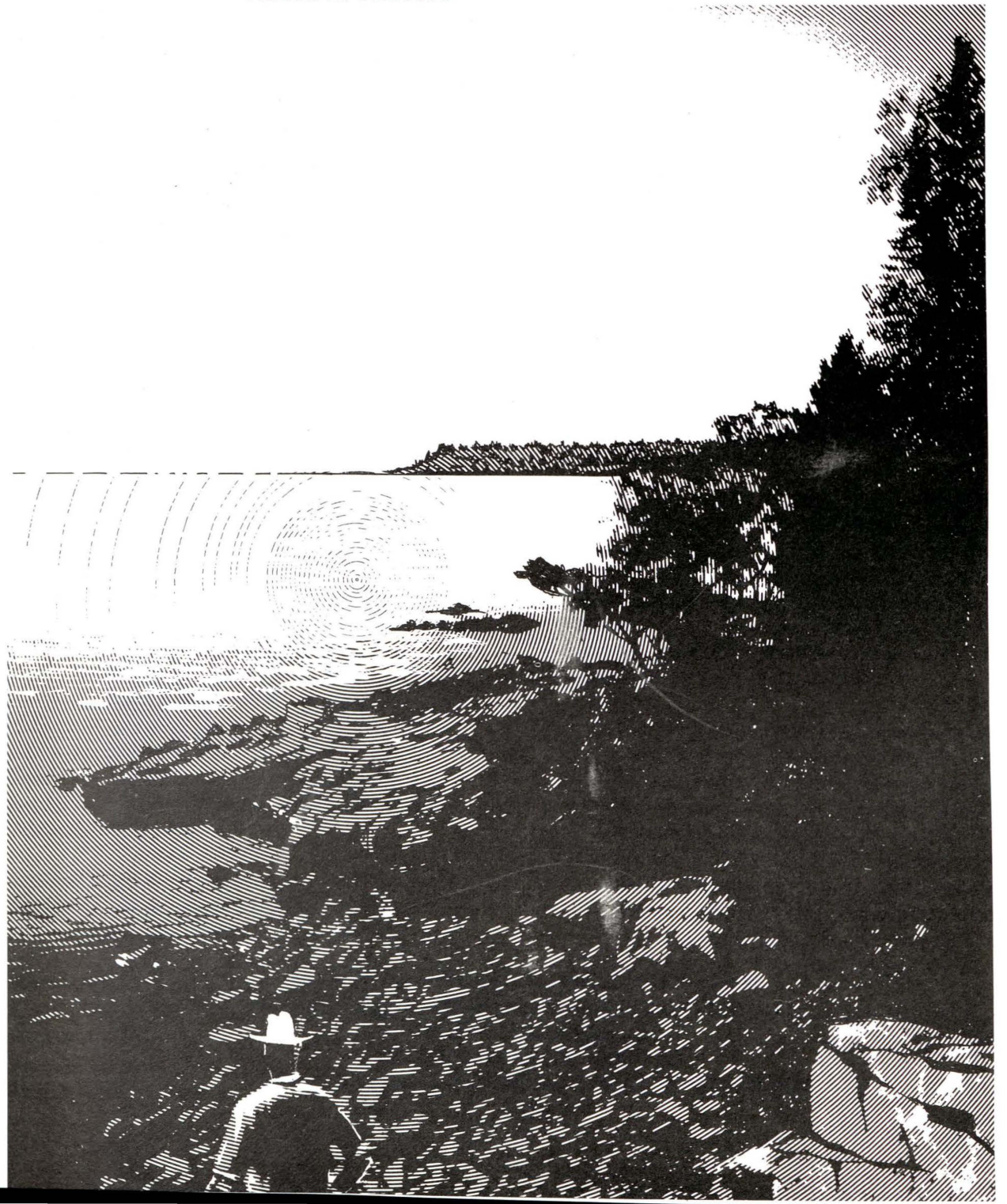

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An open-ended, qualitative survey was conducted to identify "special places" within the Black River area of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and to learn what kinds of experiences and environmental features lead people to have strong feelings for these places.

KEYWORDS: Sense of place, place attachment, forest planning, human dimensions

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In recent years, the USDA Forest Service and other land management agencies have advocated "ecosystem management" as an approach to the stewardship of natural environments (Kaufmann *et al.* 1994). Rather than focusing narrowly on the production of individual forest outputs, such as timber, wildlife, or recreation, ecosystem management views ecosystems and landscapes as complex, holistic systems. It seeks to sustain the health and integrity of ecosystems while at the same time obtaining useful products from them. For the Forest Service, the shift toward ecosystem management has included a recognition that people are an important part of ecosystems and that human values, behaviors, and perceptions must therefore be integrated into the ecosystem management process.

One important way in which National Forest planners have sought to include people's values and perceptions in the planning process is by quantifying benefits and assigning dollar amounts to them. Theoretically, measuring the value of all forest outputs in dollars would enable forest planners to find the optimal balance of both tangible and intangible outputs and to maximize the net benefits produced by the National Forests. Increasingly, however, it has become evident that there are important social and psychological values of natural settings that cannot be adequately quantified in terms of dollars (Schroeder 1996). One such value that is gaining recognition is "sense of place" or "attachment to place."

Tuan (1974) defines sense of place as "an emotional or affective bond between an individual and a particular place," which "may vary in intensity from immediate sensory delight to long-lasting and deeply rooted attachment." This kind of bond between people and places has often been overlooked in multiple-use planning. One reason for this is that computerized forest planning models such as FORPLAN (Iverson and Alston 1986, Johnson *et al.* 1986) assume that areas of land with similar biological and physical attributes are interchangeable. In regard to recreational use of sites, this would mean that people are indifferent between alternative sites, as long as the sites have the same kinds of environmental features and support the same kinds of activities. This assumption of substitutability, however, does not take into account the fact that people may hold strong personal attachments to specific places, which over time have become unique and irreplaceable to them (Mitchell *et al.* 1993, Williams *et al.* 1992).

People's emotional attachments to specific places have probably been an underlying factor in many of the controversies and appeals that have plagued the National Forest planning process. Therefore, it is critical that these values be recognized and included in the planning process from the outset. In the words of Mitchell *et al.* (1993):

> *At the heart of today's forest management issues is emotion. The 'felt' perceptions of the forest are as real and as important as 'scientific facts'. Both should be incorporated into public land management planning. To do this, public land managers need to follow a process that integrates rational, objective science with the 'felt' perceptions of the forest.* (p. 37)

The purpose of this report is to illustrate one approach that has been used in the context of

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land management planning to obtain information about people's feelings and attachments toward places they consider to be "special." The research was carried out in the Black River area of the Ottawa National Forest on the Lake Superior shore of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

In January of 1993, the Ottawa National Forest began planning for the future of the Black River area. Under the Integrated Resource Management process used by the Eastern Region of the National Forest System (USDA Forest Service 1986) the Black River was designated as an opportunity area, an interdisciplinary planning team was formed, and a public involvement process was begun to define the desired future condition for this area.

The Black River Opportunity Area (fig. 1) includes a National Scenic River, a Scenic Byway, a National Scenic Trail, and a world-class ski jump. Along the river there are several large waterfalls, as well as groves of old-growth hardwood, pine, and hemlock. Developed recreation facilities include a rustic, historic harbor; a campground; and a day-use picnic area (fig. 2).

Through both personal experience and interaction with visitors and residents, the Black River Opportunity Area team was aware that the Black River had a special character and meaning for many people. Therefore, they made a particular effort to include public values and feelings about the area in the planning process. In June 1993, I was invited

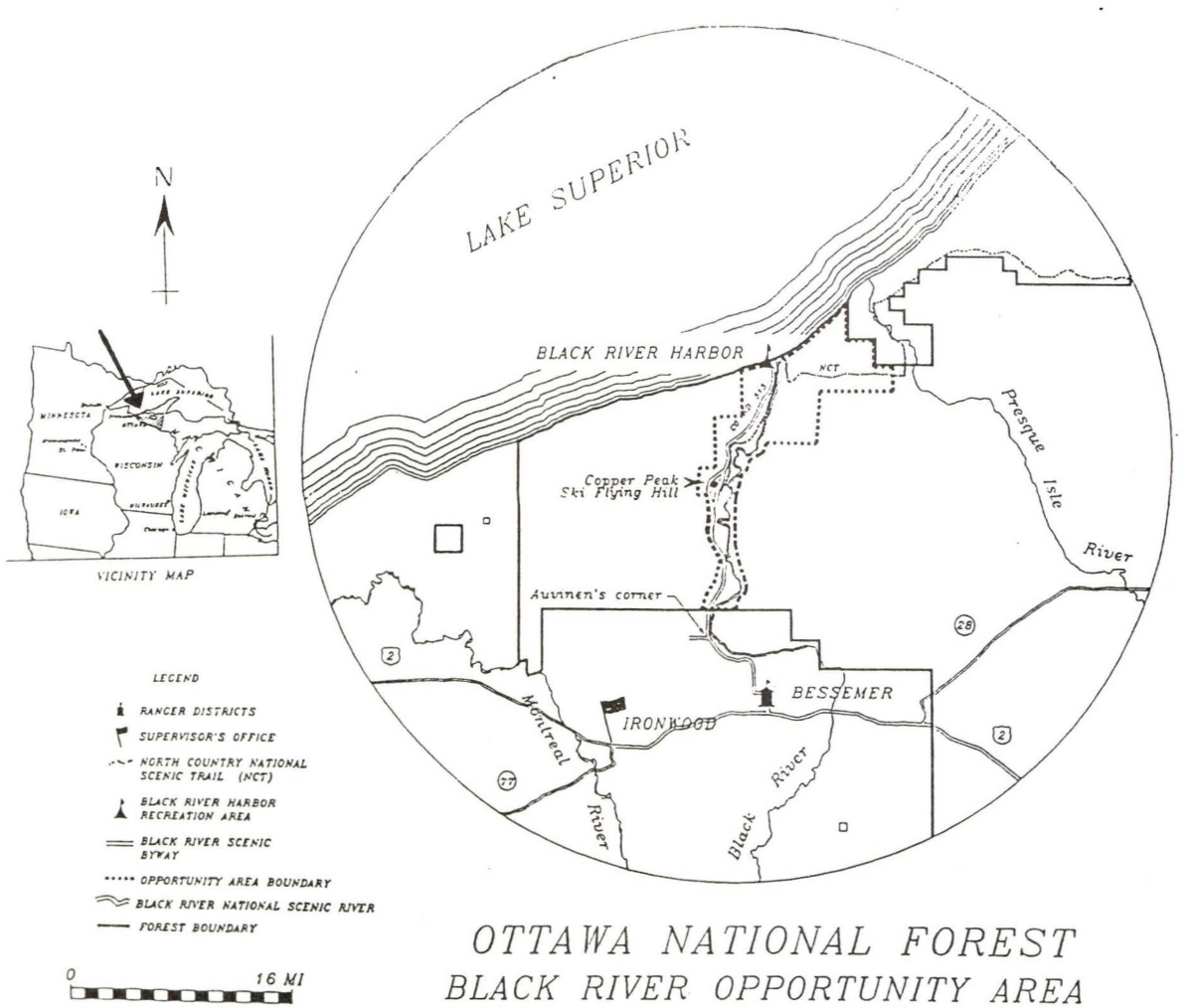

Figure 1.—*Black River Opportunity Area.*

to visit the Black River area and consult with the team about social values of forest environments. After some discussion of the Black River and the planning efforts already underway, we agreed to collaborate on a research study to find out more about people's values and feelings of attachment to the Black River area.

METHODS

Obtaining Place Descriptions

My approach to the Black River study was based on a qualitative survey method that I had developed in an earlier study at the Morton Arboretum near Chicago (Schroeder 1991). The basic method involves making contact with people who are likely to have strong feelings for the area, and then asking them to write about the features of the area and the kinds of experiences that have contributed to those feelings.

I began by designing a one-page flier announcing the Black River "Special Places" Study. The flier briefly described the purpose of the study and invited anyone who was interested in participating to contact me. The Ottawa National Forest mailed the flier to people on their public involvement mailing list for the Black River Opportunity Area and placed it in Forest Service offices, local businesses, and recreation sites where visitors to the Black River area could pick it up.

Fifty-five people responded to the flier by sending me their names and addresses. I then mailed these people instructions and a suggested format for their written responses. I left the response format as open as possible, to encourage people to describe their experiences in their own words. I asked them to think of specific places within the Black River area that were special to them, to describe these places, and to explain what thoughts, feelings, memories, and associations came to mind when

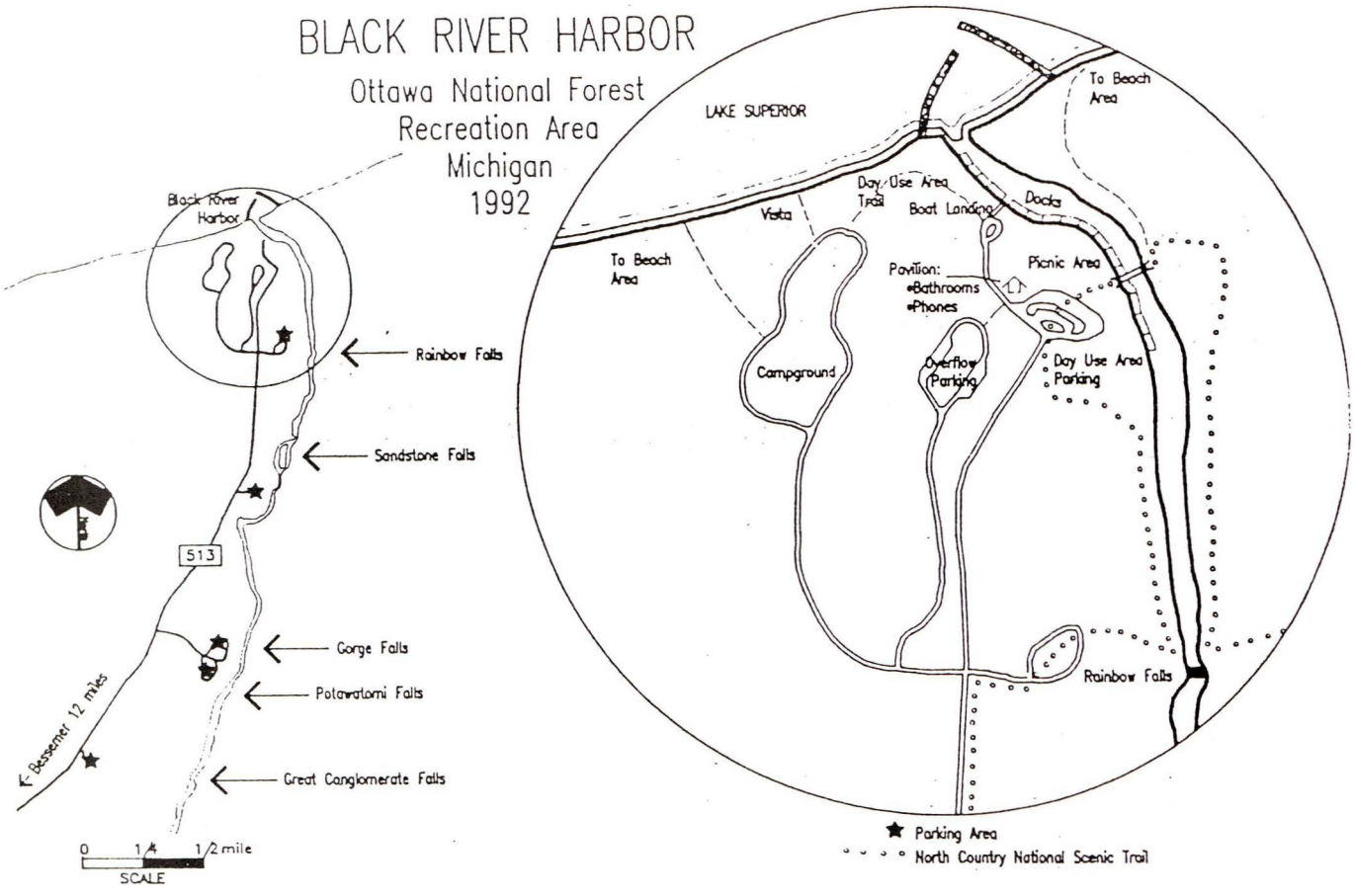

Figure 2.—*Black River Harbor Recreation Area.*

thinking about these places. Twenty-three people completed the survey and returned it to me.

Appendix A contains copies of the initial flier and the materials mailed to those who responded to the flier.

Interpreting Place Descriptions

The first step in interpretation was simply to read each response as a whole, to familiarize myself with the kinds of things that the respondent was describing about his or her special places. Next, I divided each response into smaller units of text. A text unit consisted of one or more phrases or sentences that expressed a more or less distinct idea or line of thought. Then I read each text unit carefully and began developing an outline of themes, topics, or concepts that were being mentioned. I began the topic outline with four very broad divisions or categories of information that I thought would be useful to the planning team:

1. Specific locations and features of special places;
2. Experiences, feelings, meanings, and values associated with these places;
3. Activities engaged in at these places;
4. Suggestions for future management of these places.

As I read through the responses, I built upon the initial outline by adding more specific topics and subtopics under each of the four broad divisions. In doing this, I tried to capture and organize the important themes that were emerging from my reading of the text. I cross-referenced each entry in the outline to the original text, so that I could easily refer back to and retrieve specific instances of each theme. My goal was to have each unit of text linked to at least one entry in the topic outline. The complete outline of topics that resulted from this in-depth reading of the survey responses is included in Appendix C.

When I had finished reading and cross-referencing the text, I reviewed the results by tallying the frequencies with which themes had appeared in the survey responses. My purpose in doing this was not to quantify the data in any precise way, but simply to give myself an idea of which themes I was finding most frequently across respondents. Then I began to write a report of the survey responses, including the most frequently mentioned themes as well as any other information that seemed important or useful for the planning team to have. In particular, any specific problems or recommendations for future management of the Black River area were included in the report. In writing the report, I referred back to the original text to find quotations illustrating each of the themes I presented. I tried as much as possible to present the report in terms of the actual words of the respondents. In addition, I included the complete text of the survey responses with the report to the planning team, so that they could read the responses in their entirety and form their own impressions of people's experiences of special places.

RESULTS

Participants

The 23 people who sent me descriptions of their special places included 8 residents of the area near the Black River, 11 regular or frequent vacationers to the area, and 4 first-time or occasional visitors. The ages of these people ranged from 29 to 78 years, with an average age of 54. The length of time since a person first came to the Black River area ranged from less than 1 year to 64 years, with an average of 19 years. Several of these people had lived in the vicinity of the Black River since childhood. During the previous year, 16 had hiked on the North Country Trail, 16 had picnicked at the Black River Harbor picnic area, 4 had camped in the Black River Harbor campground, and 4 had docked a boat at the harbor.

Appendix B contains a table summarizing this background information about the 23 participants.

Descriptions of Special Places

The following sections identify particular locations, features, and activities that were included in people's written descriptions of their special places. Some of the feelings, meanings, and values associated with these places and features are then described and

illustrated with quotes from the survey. Specific problems, requests, and suggestions for management offered by several of the people are also presented.

Locations

The two general locations most frequently mentioned were the harbor area and the waterfall area. Almost everyone who responded to the survey included both of these areas in their descriptions. Specific locations mentioned as part of the harbor area included the lakeshore or beach, the picnic area, and the campground, as well as the boats and the docks themselves. Of the individual waterfalls, Rainbow Falls was the one most often mentioned by name. The area along the Black River between the harbor and Rainbow Falls, particularly the trail along the east side of the river, was also mentioned as a special place by several of the people.

Natural features

In addition to the Black River itself and its waterfalls, the natural features most often mentioned in people's descriptions included Lake Superior, trees and forests, and wild plants and animals. People mentioned topographic and geologic features as well. Several people commented on the variety of rocks and stones to be found along the lakeshore. Some descriptions also included ephemeral features such as weather (wind and rain), sunsets, and the seasons.

Humanmade features

When humanmade features of the area were mentioned, they were usually described as making a positive contribution to people's experiences. For example, the Black River Road or Scenic Byway was mentioned by several people as an attractive scenic drive. Most of the survey participants mentioned the trails that have been developed in the area, particularly the trails to the waterfalls. The wooden steps and decks that provide access to the river and the waterfalls also frequently appeared in descriptions. The most frequently mentioned built structure was the suspension bridge. Several people described crossing this bridge on their way to the beach. Some people also said that they enjoyed seeing the boats at the harbor.

People

Survey participants often included other people in their descriptions of special places. Their experiences of these places include their own family members, other visitors and users of the area, Government agency personnel, fishermen, and other persons representing the history, culture, and management of the Black River area.

Activities

The activities most often mentioned in connection with people's visits to their special places were walking, hiking, sightseeing, and viewing various items of interest (e.g., waterfalls, flowers, boats). Fishing (both sport and commercial) was also mentioned by a number of people. Several people said they engaged in nature study activities such as plant identification, bird watching, and rock collecting. For some, socializing and sharing information with other people was also an important activity. Some permanent residents wrote that simply living in the Black River area was their favorite "activity." Several people used photography as a way of remembering good times they had enjoyed at their favorite places, and three people also said that they had kept journals or diaries of their experiences in the Black River area.

Feelings, meanings, and values

The locations, features, people, and activities listed above are associated with many different feelings, meanings, and values. Some of the most important of these are illustrated below, with quotes from the survey responses. Numbers in parentheses after the quotes indicate which participant is being quoted.

People's descriptions are full of words expressing their **positive feelings and enjoyment** of the Black River area. Superlatives such as "great," "fantastic," and "wonderful" were frequently used in reference to specific places or features, or to the area as a whole.

> *"Truly a magnificent area!" (#6)*

> *"We parked and walked down to the marvelous beach." (#20)*

> *"A wonderful, beautiful place - I'll be back!" (#4)*

Three people went so far as to call the Black River area a heaven or a paradise.

"Outdoors man's paradise!" (#2)

"Did you ever wonder what a part of heaven looks like? I found out 13 years ago when I moved here." (#14)

"It's our Paradise. We love and respect it and fervently hope it is not improved to death." (#20)

The **beauty** of the area and its scenery was one of the most often mentioned qualities making the Black River special.

"Our family has spent much time walking the shoreline and enjoying the natural beauty of the beach and lake." (#5)

"We have never talked to a person that wasn't impressed with the beauty of the area." (#6)

"The pleasure I get from living within and sharing a place of beauty that is my home is hard to describe." (#14)

The beauty of the Black River area is experienced through all the senses, including **sight** ...

"Trails and staircases with outlandishly beautiful visual effect." (#7)

sound ...

"The sounds of quiet solitude around you and as you approach the river the sounds change to the rush of water & the sounds of the falls." (#22)

and **smell**.

"The smell so pine fresh you can't ever forget being here." (#7)

Along with the beauty of the area there is a sense of **serenity** or peace.

"We hiked the shore and truly enjoyed the peace and serenity of the area." (#4)

"This is one of the few spots we've found where you can enjoy the quiet and serenity of nature." (#5)

"It is so very quiet and relaxing. To walk the beach gives a person a very peaceful feeling." (#16)

For many people, the beauty and serenity of the Black River is a consequence of its **natural, remote, and wild** condition. For some people, the entire area is seen as unique due to its lack of development.

"Black River is still in its natural and beautiful condition ... The shore is unique in not having resorts and the things that usually follow that. Please, keep it the way it is!!" (#17)

"We appreciate the rustic and primitive character of the whole Black River area. We pass thru many more developed parks to spend our vacations in this area" (#5)

"Our village and harbor are isolated and surrounded by miles of forest with few roads." (#12)

"It is beautiful and the feeling of wilderness lakeshore is great." (#8)

There are opportunities for **solitude and privacy**.

"We enjoy the ... solitude one can find by spending an afternoon at the park." (#5)

"Even though this is a much used trail, one can often be the only one there." (#12)

"Place to enjoy solitude; ... being alone but not super-far from others." (#15)

Another important aspect of the natural character of the area is its **clean and pristine** quality.

"Clean air!" (#2)

"We enjoy fishing at this very scenic and pristine spot." (#5)

"The clean beach with its crystal clear, ice cold water." (#6)

People wrote of the **abundance** of natural features ...

"I don't know of any other place where 5 large waterfalls are in such a small stretch of river." (#1)

"The wild raspberries, thimbleberries and blackberries were abundant." (#6)

"There were always plenty of birds to watch and listen to, plenty of 'critters' of all kinds to see and enjoy." (#17)

their **variety** ...

"It has an exceptionally varied geology, flora, and fauna. ... The variety of plants, trees, fungi and topographic features mean a lot to me." (#12)

"Every kind, color, and shape of rock is visible in the crystal clear water, and along the beaches. Rock hounds are in awe." (#6)

and their **uniqueness and rarity**.

"The sight of rare wildlife that wanders through the yard." (#14)

"... special flowers, like pink lady slippers, which are not too common." (#17)

"The colorful pebbles are very unique as to variety and geologic origin." (#12)

For some people, the beauty of the natural features evokes strong emotions, and are experienced as **awesome, breathtaking, or spiritual**.

"We recommend to everyone that is able to see each of the falls, as the trails leading to them are also breathtakingly beautiful." (#6)

"My favorite spot! North Country Trail - Chills on my spine!" (#7)

"Hemlocks - spiritual - 'room'/freedom/ space to 'be' beneath their grandeur - majesty of nature; minuteness of man." (#15)

The waterfalls, especially, convey a sense of **force or energy**.

"The power and energy of the falling water was mesmerizing." (#13)

"Water gushing over falls in spring and fall - the power and beauty of the moment." (#7)

In terms of sheer size, the most impressive feature of the Black River area is Lake Superior itself.

"... to remember how 'large' the lake is and how significant it is vs. man ... being just a speck in the universe." (#15)

Some people pointed out the significance of the Black River area as an **entry or gateway** to the largest of the Great Lakes.

"Gateway to Lake Superior ..." (#2)

"An opening to our largest - Lake Superior." (#7)

In addition to its many natural features, the **friendliness** of the people of the Black River area also contributes to its special quality.

"Walking to the falls and harbor. Talking to all the friendly people who came there." (#17)

"The people who work here are friendly and helpful." (#19)

"I have met a lot of good people down at the bottom of the falls in the 35 years I have fished here." (#8)

The **history** of the area as a commercial fishing community is important, especially for those people whose families were a part of this history. Two people wrote detailed reminiscences of their childhood experiences and their parents' and grandparents' roles in the history of the harbor.

"My grandparents were a part of the park history." (#20)

"At that time my father was caretaker of the Black River Harbor ... and started all the bookings for the fishermen." (#3)

Not all memories of the Black River area are entirely pleasant. Some people recalled **difficulties** or hardships of the past ...

"When I was fishing for hire it was a bad harbor. The sand bar was clear across the channel and when the lake was rough we would drag our keel and hope the next wave would push us over." (#3)

"In 1929 we traveled to Black River Harbor, (in horse and buggy). That took us almost one day. The road was mud and dirt." (#18)

and there are some elements of **difficulty and danger** even in the present.

"Rainbow Falls ... at certain times it can be rough." (#3)

"In winter I watch a fishing ship ramming ice for 2 hours to get out and do some fishing. ... Strong winds off lake and wind sock always a reminder. Crucial." (#7)

"Living there is an experience I will never forget, (including the bear that tore off the cabin steps and part of the porch!)" (#17)

Experiences like these do not seem to detract from people's feelings for the area, however. If anything, they add to its character and evoke a sense of respect.

People mentioned a few **problems** they had experienced in the Black River area. The most frequent of these was the black flies.

"If only the 'black fly problem' could be controlled, we would be convinced that it would be the 'perfect place.'" (#6)

"Black flies - ugh!" (#7)

Others included the water supply ...

"I am concerned about the water problem and availability." (#7A)

trail erosion ...

"The trail is pretty worn in places and I kept thinking what it must be like in a heavy rain." (#13)

missed or neglected opportunities for access ...

"Narrows. Just discovered, last trip. A beautiful hidden little area. A great opportunity, but left abandoned ... one would drive right by. A real opportunity missed." (#11)

"I am disappointed the cross country trails are not proceeding this year as I was looking forward to accessing even more of the river and forest areas." (#10)

lack of signs on trails ...

"Trail east of Black River. ... (I don't know if this is NCT [North Country Trail] - Lack of signage.)" (#11)

and lack of access to health and emergency services.

"The only reason I moved back to Illinois was because I do not drive, and at my age, I needed to be able to get help in emergencies, since there is no bus or taxi that goes out to the harbor area." (#17)

Human activity in the Black River area has brought about many **changes** over the years, and these changes are especially apparent to those who have lived in the area a long time. Some of these changes are seen as positive...

"Black River Harbor, itself. It has changed to the better for fishing boats. ... The docks are a lot better, and as time goes on it will get better." (#3)

"The improved access to the falls is great. The handicapped area was a wonderful improvement without affecting the beauty of the place." (#16)

and some are seen as negative.

"Before the campground existed, we loved the special wooded area where it now 'intrudes'. ... It wasn't junky with cement and debris then. It's sad to go there now with the big cistern on the beach and old foundation cement." (#20)

"I have never seen as many people down Black River Rd. as I have this year. I have a cabin on Black River Road and I remember when it was much quieter and calmer." (#8)

Overall, the participants' responses suggest that human influence need not be bad or damaging to the area. One positive aspect of human involvement in the Black River area is the **high quality of maintenance, cleanliness, and construction** of facilities and structures.

"Black River Harbor campground. It was clean and neat with roomy sites. We were impressed with the bathrooms and mowed lawns in the campground. The sites were clean and spacious." (#9)

"The picnic area is always so neat and clean it is very inviting." (#16)

"... wonderful, well constructed, wooden steps leading down to a platform for viewing the falls." (#6)

"It's really kept clean and I like that. ... I live here, it's my home and homes should be neat, inside and outside, private or public. Black River area is neat!" (#19)

Several people especially appreciated the measures taken by managers to enhance **accessibility**.

"The Forest Service should be commended for the steps and the easy access to the beautiful falls." (#18)

"I am 78 yrs. old, walk slowly with a cane or with help from family and the wide paths recently put in are a blessing to handicapped people." (#19)

With regard to future management, some people had **suggestions and requests** for enhancements and improved access that they felt would not conflict with the character of the area.

"Improving visual aspects of N. Country Trail always acceptable." (#7)

"... before we came there was a restaurant in the area which burned down. Would like to encourage another to be built. Also, a grocery or convenience store would be appreciated." (#7A)

"Would love to have rental horses available, for forest trails." (#2)

"Please develop trail connecting to 'Porkies' [Porcupine Mountains]." (#7)

"I would like to see the Black River Opportunity Area opened up to more uses - hiking, camping, cross-country skiing, 3-4 wheeling, and snowmobiling. This would really allow more people to experience the area." (#11)

"A small visitors center would be nice." (#16)

"I strongly believe better signage of trail heads, maps, etc. are needed so a new visitor knows what opportunities are available." (#11)

Overall, however, these people like the Black River as it is now, and many of them are concerned about the prospect of future changes and development that could diminish the special qualities and character of the area. The single most frequent recommendation for management was to **limit development** and maintain the area as it is now. Ten out of the 23 participants expressed this viewpoint, sometimes in very strong terms.

"We feel development should be limited to preservation of this natural state; erosion prevention, garbage removal and maintenance of existing grounds." (#5)

"Please keep forest as is. NO LOGGING! None! Maintain area." (#7)

"I feel it has been developed enough as it still seems like you're in the middle of nowhere. ... I say STOP further development. I realize this is selfish but that's how I feel." (#8)

"We ... live somewhat primitively. Away from the hustle and bustle of our society. We hope this relative isolation will continue." (#12)

"'I recommend' Leave the harbor as 'God' put it there. I love it as it is. It is in a very good condition as is. I am a Mother Nature man myself. Leave things as God intended." (#18)

"We ... fervently hope it is not improved to death. Let Nature do what she does so well. ... mostly we want it to stay pristine and quiet. Keep out the ATV's, the joy riders, and those who would cut and spoil the wilderness. Please, no more improvements!" (#20)

The desire to keep the area in its present condition is understandable, given the feelings of **fondness and love** that many of these people have for the Black River area.

"I remember Black River docks with fondness ... and of course I love the park and the many things that come to my mind." (#3)

"We love the flora and fauna." (#12)

"It is a place that is dear to my heart and my memories are good ones!" (#17)

They have a sense of **gratitude** for being able to visit or live in this area ...

"Just knowing that there are still places like this that both the locals and the vacationers can go makes us very thankful." (#6)

"Living here is a privilege and blessing." (#21)

respect for the people who have worked to make and keep it a good place ...

"So many fishermen that helped build the park and the CCC and the county and then the Forest Service, they all did a fine job and still doing it." (#3)

"Working with the Forest Service has given us a true appreciation for all the work that has been done here, so the public can enjoy the vast beauty of the falls." (#6)

and appreciation for the opportunity to express these feelings.

"Thank you for giving us this opportunity to express our views and feelings." (#16)

"You do not ask for a name and address, but I am proud to add it and glad to have the chance to fill in this survey." (#17)

To summarize, for these 23 people the Black River area seems to combine the best of the human and the natural worlds. Although it is not a wilderness in the strict sense understood by many resource managers, it does have many of the features and provides many of the experiences that people associate with wilderness. At the same time, it has a strong sense of human history, community, and regional culture. The human dimension is an important part of the Black River, and one of the ways in which this human dimension expresses itself is in feelings of appreciation and love for nonhuman nature. Management has enabled people to have access to the area and to experience its natural beauty and serenity. At the same time the area has remained relatively remote and lacks the kind of commercial development and crowding that could spoil the natural beauty and serenity of the area for these people. Whether visiting or living in the area, the people who participated in this research feel privileged to enjoy this harmonious combination of natural and human features, and they hope that future management and development will not diminish the Black River's qualities they cherish the most.

DISCUSSION

To understand the significance and implications of these results for the planning process, some methodological issues need to be discussed.

The purpose of this study was to understand what kinds of experiences lead people to have strong feelings for special places in the Black River area. To achieve this purpose, I employed a voluntary, self-selected sample of people. This sampling approach was an efficient and cost-effective way of ensuring that the sample would include people who had experienced the kinds of feelings I wanted to learn about. The nonrandom nature of the sample, however, means that the survey cannot be used to estimate the proportion of the general population that holds the various views represented in these responses.

Another methodological issue has to do with subjectivity in the interpretation of survey responses. That is, to what extent did my own experiences and perspectives influence my interpretations of the text? One way to answer this question would be to have two or more people read the same text and then compare their independent interpretations. In the present study, however, time and circumstances did not permit having more than one person read and interpret the survey responses. Also, even if there were more than one interpreter, there would still be no precise way to measure the correspondence between two different qualitative interpretations of the same text.

Some contemporary qualitative researchers maintain that any interpretation of text is

inherently subjective. That is, an interpretation is the result of an interaction between the reader and the text, and therefore necessarily reflects the unique characteristics of both. Although it may not be possible to achieve perfect objectivity, it is still important to strive for a degree of impartiality when interpreting text, and not to simply read one's own perspective into the words of the respondents. In interpreting this survey, I employed several checks against imposing too much of my own viewpoint on the survey responses:

1. I adopted a procedure that forced me to read each phrase in the responses and to carefully consider how it fit into the outline of themes that I had constructed so far. This made it difficult for me to skip over or ignore statements that did not conform to the interpretation I was developing.

2. I deliberately watched for viewpoints in the surveys that were dissonant with my own attitudes and values, and made a special effort to be sure they were included in the outline.

3. In writing the report, I sought to document each important theme with quotations from two or more respondents who had clearly expressed that theme. If I had difficulty in finding convincing examples, then I knew I had to reconsider whether that theme was really present in the survey responses.

4. I sent copies of my final interpretation to the original 55 people who responded to the flier, asking them for their comments. Thus, anyone who thought I had misrepresented his or her viewpoint had an opportunity to express disagreement. (I received no responses to this followup mailing.)

5. Finally, in the report to the planning team, I included the full text of the survey responses, so that the team members could read the responses in their entirety and form a fuller impression of participants' feelings for the Black River area.

In general, the results of this study were corroborated by information obtained in the other public involvement activities conducted by the Black River Opportunity Area team. Based on all their interactions with the public, the planning team established the desired future condition for the Black River Opportunity Area as "maintaining the character and facilities of the area, with an emphasis on non-motorized use east of the byway" (USDA Forest Service 1995).

This research study was designed to focus on one specific geographic area and to provide input to a planning process for that area. There are, however, some notable similarities between the results of this study and the earlier Morton Arboretum study on which this survey method was based. In particular, the importance of beauty and serenity in the experience of natural places, and the presence of a harmonious blending of natural and human influences were important themes in both studies. This is especially interesting in view of the very different contexts of these two areas. The Black River is located in a very rural region far from any large cities and surrounded by largely undeveloped forest land. The Morton Arboretum, by contrast, is located less than an hour's drive from Chicago and is surrounded by a densely populated and highly developed metropolitan area. Future research could help to determine whether similar common themes occur across a wide spectrum of kinds of special places.

CONCLUSION

These results shed light on aspects of the relationship between people and the Black River area that the opportunity area team had identified as important to their planning process. It provided insight into the experiences that give rise to strong place attachments and identified some of the specific places and features within the Black River area that support these experiences.

By itself this survey cannot measure how important these people's experiences are compared to other valued uses of the Black River area, nor can it resolve issues such as how the benefits of preserving the character of the area should be balanced against the benefits of increasing development and tourism. Therefore, this study should be viewed as one source of input in a larger planning and public involvement process.

There is no standardized formula or methodology for including sense of place and other deeply felt values in forest planning. This study illustrates one of a variety of approaches that can be usefully applied for this purpose. To be successful, any such method requires sensitivity and openness on the part of planners and managers, and a genuine desire to understand how people experience the forest places that are being managed (Driver *et al.* 1995).

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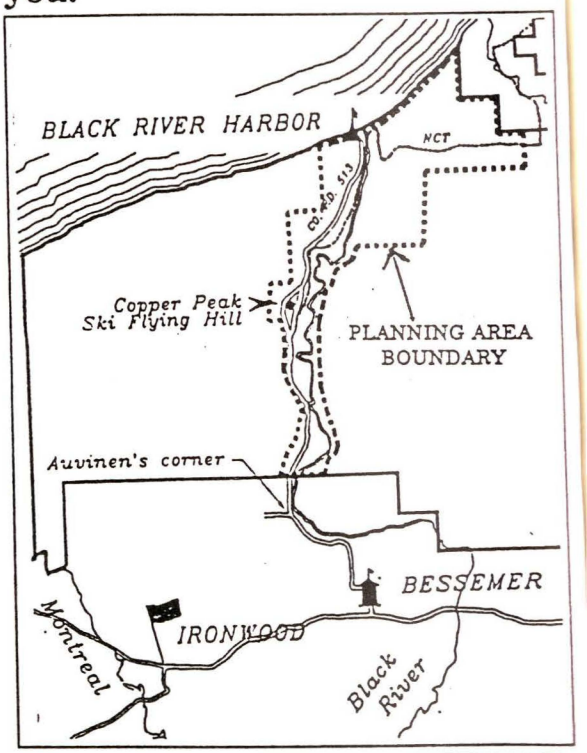
APPENDIX A

Initial Flier and Survey Materials

TELL US WHAT THE BLACK RIVER MEANS TO YOU . . .

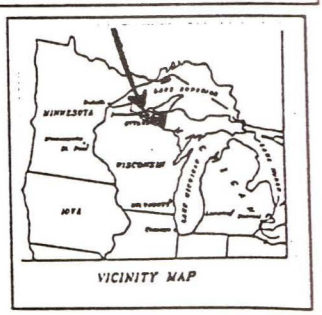
The Ottawa National Forest has begun a planning process for future management of the Black River and its surrounding area. As part of this planning effort, we are inviting visitors and residents to participate in **the Black River "Special Places" Study**. The purpose of the study is to find out how people experience and value this area. Whether you're a first-time visitor or a life-long resident, **we'd like to hear from you!**

The Black River is located just north of Bessemer, MI. The map to the right shows the general area that is included in this planning effort. The area includes several waterfalls, a National Forest Scenic Byway, A National Scenic River, The North Country National Scenic Trail, and the Black River Harbor.



Participants in the study will be asked to describe memorable places that they have been to in the Black River area, and to explain what these places mean to them. This input will help the planning team in making future decisions about the Black River area.

To receive instructions on how you can participate in this study, call the USDA Forest Service, Bessemer Ranger District at 906-667-0261. Leave your name and mailing address, and say that you want to be on the mailing list for the Black River "Special Places" Study. Or you may fill out the form below and drop it off at the Bessemer Ranger District Office, 500 N. Moore Street, Bessemer, MI. You can also leave the form with the campground host at the Black River Harbor Campground, or mail it to:



Herbert W. Schroeder
USDA Forest Service
North Central Forest Experiment Station
5801 N. Pulaski Road, Bldg. C, Room 104
Chicago IL 60646

To be included in the study, we must hear from you by September 30, 1993.

Please send me information on how to participate in the Black River "Special Places" Study:

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

North Central Forest Experiment Station
5801-C N. Pulaski Rd., Chicago IL 60646
(312) 588-7650

4000

May 12, 1994

Dear :

Thank you for your interest in the Black River "Special Places" Study. To assist the Ottawa National Forest in planning for the future of the Black River, we would like to learn more about how people see, experience, and value this area. For that purpose, we are inviting you to tell us what the Black River area means to you. This includes thoughts, feelings, and memories that you associate with special places within the Black River area, as well as your impressions of the area as a whole.

If you would like to participate in this study, the following pages provide instructions and a format in which you can write your comments. Using this format will make it easier for us to organize and summarize different people's replies. If, however, you find that this format does not work well for you, feel free to respond in whatever way you like. And please don't worry about your spelling, grammar, or writing style. We are interested in whatever you have to tell us about the Black River area, however you want to say it.

All replies will be kept anonymous. There is no need to include your name or address with your response. The results of this study will be made available to the Ottawa National Forest planning team as they continue the planning process for the Black River.

Once again, thank you for your interest in this study.

Sincerely,

HERBERT W. SCHROEDER
Research Social Scientist

Enclosures

THE BLACK RIVER "SPECIAL PLACES" STUDY

>>> Please read these instructions carefully before you begin. <<<

On the attached pages, we would like you to tell us about one or more places in the Black River area that are special to you. If there is more than one place you would like to describe, use a different page for each place. Pages are provided for you to describe up to four places. Feel free to add more pages, if there are more than four places you would like to tell us about.

For each place you describe, follow these three steps:

1. Select from memory a place within the Black River area that stands out in your mind as being important, memorable, or special to you personally. It might be a place you have been to many times, or a place you have seen only once. You do not have to know the exact location of the place -- that is, you may select a place you remember being in, even if you can't remember exactly where in the Black River area it is located.

2. In the space labeled "DESCRIPTION OF PLACE" briefly describe the place that you have chosen. Don't just write the name of the place, but describe in a few sentences what the place is like - for example, what the place looks, sounds, smells, or feels like; important features that are present, and so on.

3. On the same page, in the space labeled "WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU", please describe the thoughts, feelings, memories, and associations that come to mind when you think about this place. What makes this place important for you? What kind of experiences have you had there? Write as much or as little as you like. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in anything at all you want to tell us about why this place is important or special to you.

When you have finished writing about your places, please answer the questions on the last page, labeled "ABOUT YOURSELF". If there is anything else you would like to tell us about the Black River area or about yourself, please do so in the space labeled "OTHER COMMENTS" on the last page.

Finally, place all the pages in the stamped, self-addressed return envelope and mail them to the North Central Forest Experiment Station.

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY. YOUR INPUT WILL HELP THE OTTAWA NATIONAL FOREST TO BETTER INCLUDE PUBLIC VALUES IN PLANNING FOR THE BLACK RIVER AREA.

PLACE #1

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU:

PLACE #2

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU:

PLACE #3

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU:

PLACE #4

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU:

ABOUT YOURSELF ...

Is your permanent residence in the vicinity of the Black River (i.e. in the Ironwood-Bessemer-Wakefield area)?

_____ Yes _____ No

If you do <u>not</u> live in this area, do you vacation here regularly?

_____ Yes _____ No

What is your age? _____

How old were you when you came to
the Black River area for the first time? _____

What kinds of activities do you most enjoy doing in the Black River area?

Which of the following have you done in the last year? (Check all that apply)

___ Docked a boat at the Black River Harbor
___ Hiked on the North Country Trail
___ Camped at the Black River Campground
___ Picnicked at the Black River Harbor Picnic Area

OTHER COMMENTS: (Use the back of this page if you need more room)

APPENDIX B

Summary Table of Participants' Backgrounds

Participant #	Resident	Regular Vacationer	Age (yr)	Age when first at BR	Years since first at BR	Docked at BR Harbor	Hiked on NC Trail	Camped at BR Campground	Picnicked at BR Picnic Area
1	X		29	2	27		X		X
2		X	50	46	4	X	X		
3	X		68	12	56	X			
4			38	38	0		X		X
5		X	54	40	14				X
6			56	53	3		X	X	X
7		X	44	40	4		X		X
7A		X	41	37	4		X		X
8		X	46	2	44	X	X		
9			49	49	0		X	X	
10		X	60	30	30		X		X
11		X	46	30	16		X		X
12		X	75	50	25				
13			55	40	15				X
14	X		38	26	12		X	X	X
15	X		38	36	2		X		X
16		X	65	25	40		X		X
17		X	74	70	4		X		X
18	X		77	13	64				X
19	X		78	75	3				X
20		X	63	19	44	X	X		X
21	X		40	27	13		X	X	X
22	X		50	45	5		X		

APPENDIX C

Outline of Themes Identified in Place Descriptions

(The number in brackets before each theme is the number of respondents who expressed that theme.)

[23] **BLACK RIVER SPECIAL PLACES**

[23] - **ENVIRONMENT**
[21] - - **Physical / Geologic**
[18] - - - Water
[15] - - - - Lake Superior
[4] - - - - - waves
[10] - - - - river, streams
[7] - - - - - water in river/stream (level/ flow)
[10] - - - Rocks & stones
[4] - - - Ice
[11] - - - Topography
[4] - - - - hills, bluffs, & ridges
[6] - - - - moving up or downhill
[3] - - - - - winding
[3] - - - - vista points
[1] - - - - island
[18] - - **Vegetation**
[14] - - - Trees & Forests
[6] - - - - conifers
[3] - - - - hardwoods
[4] - - - - tree remains (stumps, driftwood)
[9] - - - Wild Plants
[5] - - - - wild flowers
[1] - - - - wild berries
[1] - - - - poison ivy / sumac
[2] - - - - fungus
[3] - - - Grass (lawn)
[15] - - **Wildlife, animals**
[4] - - - Fish
[1] - - - Frogs
[3] - - - Birds
[3] - - - Insects
[7] - - - Mammals
[19] - - **People**
[5] - - - Fishermen
[12] - - - Family members
[2] - - - - family pets
[7] - - - Government / agency
[5] - - - - USFS
[7] - - - Other users
[2] - - - Historical characters
[23] - - **Artifacts & signs of use**
[11] - - - Roads
[9] - - - - Black River Road
[2] - - - - - approaching harbor
[2] - - - - - Scenic Byway
[2] - - - Parking lots
[15] - - - Trails
[7] - - - - trails to falls
[4] - - - - North Country Trail
[14] - - - Buildings & structures
[3] - - - - cabins
[2] - - - - fishing shacks
[1] - - - - pavilion
[10] - - - - bridge
[1] - - - - ski jump
[7] - - - - wooden steps, boardwalks, decks
[4] - - - Facilities
[1] - - - - picnic tables
[3] - - - - benches
[3] - - - Sanitary
[2] - - - - restrooms
[1] - - - - dumpsters
[2] - - - Campfires
[3] - - - Litter / trash
[9] - - - Boats
[2] - - - Erosion
[1] - - - Signs
[23] - - **Places & areas**
[21] - - - Harbor area
[11] - - - - harbor itself
[1] - - - - - breakwater
[2] - - - - - docks
[1] - - - - area between Harbor & campground
[6] - - - - campground
[3] - - - - - campsites
[9] - - - - picnic area / park
[17] - - - - lakeshore / beach
[22] - - - Black River & surrounds
[2] - - - - lower reaches
[6] - - - - between harbor & waterfalls
[4] - - - - - east side of river
[22] - - - - waterfalls
[7] - - - - - Rainbow Falls
[2] - - - - - - below Rainbow Falls
[3] - - - - - Sandstone Falls
[4] - - - - - Gorge Falls
[4] - - - - - Potawatomi Falls
[1] - - - - - Conglomerate Falls
[1] - - - - - between waterfalls
[1] - - - - The Narrows
[2] - - - Area east of river
[3] - - - Black River Harbor Village
[1] - - - Private residence
[2] - - - Copper Peak

[23] BLACK RIVER SPECIAL PLACES (cont.)

[12] - - **Atmospheric / climatic**
[1] - - - Air
[1] - - - Sky
[2] - - - Shade
[5] - - - Sunsets
[7] - - - Weather
[2] - - - Temperature
[11] - - **Time / season**
[11] - - - Seasons
[5] - - - - summer
[7] - - - - fall
[2] - - - - - fall color
[5] - - - - winter
[5] - - - - spring
[4] - - - Time of day
[3] - - - - night, evening
[1] - - - - afternoon

[23] - **EXPERIENCE**
[21] - - **Evaluations**
[19] - - - Positive
[12] - - - - strong positive
[3] - - - - - paradise, heaven
[9] - - - - comparative (better, best, favorite)
[13] - - - Negative, difficult, dangerous, strenuous
[23] - - **Feelings / felt qualities**
[17] - - - Beauty
[2] - - - - art
[12] - - - Peace, serenity, quiet
[5] - - - Glorious, majestic, awe-inspiring
[6] - - - Power, force, energy
[6] - - - Mystery, spiritual, ineffable
[17] - - - Happy, good times, enjoyment, pleasure
[10] - - - Appreciation, thankfulness
[8] - - - Fondness, love
[4] - - - Interesting
[4] - - - Exciting, fun
[1] - - - Solace
[4] - - - Impressive, being impressed
[2] - - - Inviting, beckoning
[2] - - - Fascination
[1] - - - Gentle, delicate
[2] - - - Freedom, space
[1] - - - Admiration, respect
[1] - - - Sadness
[21] - - **Relational qualities**
[8] - - - Abundance (many, lots ...)
[14] - - - Size, scale
[13] - - - - large
[2] - - - - - wide
[2] - - - - - high, tall
[3] - - - - small
[1] - - - - - narrow
[5] - - - Age
[3] - - - - old, mature
[2] - - - - new
[6] - - - Variety
[4] - - - Difference / contrast
[5] - - - Change over time
[3] - - - - positive change
[2] - - - - negative change
[1] - - - - loss of someone / something
[1] - - - - still the same
[8] - - - Transition: entry, gateway, approach
[10] - - - Refuge
[2] - - - - shelter
[9] - - - - Solitude, privacy
[1] - - - - Hidden
[7] - - - Uniqueness, rarity
[1] - - - Centrality
[2] - - - Intrusion
[1] - - - - Softening, making less intrusive
[4] - - - Specialness
[17] - - **Nature values**
[6] - - - Experience nature
[5] - - - Respect, protect nature
[4] - - - Rustic, primitive, undeveloped
[4] - - - Escape from stress, city, etc.
[9] - - - Clear, fresh, pristine, clean
[4] - - - Remoteness, isolation
[4] - - - Wild, wilderness
[8] - - **Social values**
[6] - - - Friendly, good people
[4] - - - Sharing, togetherness
[2] - - - Romance
[1] - - - Safety
[5] - - **Cultural value**
[5] - - - History, historical
[13] - - **Managerial values**
[4] - - - Information
[7] - - - Accessibility
[1] - - - Inexpensive
[7] - - - Quality: Well-maintained, well-built, clean
[3] - - - Services & facilities
[14] - - **Sensory modes**
[13] - - - sight, scenery
[3] - - - - color
[8] - - - sounds
[4] - - - smells
[9] - - **Memories**
[3] - - - Memories of childhood / youth in area
[3] - - - vivid memories
[13] - - **Use of area**
[4] - - - First visit or experience of area

[23] BLACK RIVER SPECIAL PLACES (cont.)

[10] - - - Frequency of use / time spent
[3] - - - Want / intend to return
[3] - - **Imagining**
[1] - - **Knowing the area well**

[23] - **ACTIVITIES**
[22] - - **Movement oriented activities**
[20] - - - Nonmotorized
[18] - - - - hiking, walking, climbing
[2] - - - - bicycling
[3] - - - - Skiing
[2] - - - - Horseback riding
[6] - - - Motorized
[4] - - - - Driving
[2] - - - - 3 / 4 wheeling
[1] - - - - Snowmobiling
[5] - - - Water
[4] - - - - swimming
[1] - - - - rafting / tubing
[10] - - **Place oriented**
[6] - - - Picnicking / Barbecuing
[5] - - - Camping
[1] - - - - hosting
[12] - - **Wildlife / consumptive**
[12] - - - Fishing
[6] - - - - sport fishing
[1] - - - - - guiding fishermen
[5] - - - - commercial fishing
[2] - - - - - selling fish
[11] - - **Nature study / collecting**
[2] - - - Learning / teaching, educational
[1] - - - Identifying plants
[5] - - - Rock collecting
[1] - - - Picking mushrooms
[1] - - - Birdwatching
[1] - - - Star-watching
[19] - - **Passive / reflective**
[5] - - - Sit
[3] - - - Think, meditate
[4] - - - Relax
[13] - - - Watching, observing, sightseeing
[8] - - - Photography
[3] - - - Journal writing
[6] - - **Socializing, meeting people, communicating**
[4] - - **Exploring, discovering**
[2] - - **Playing**
[7] - - **Visiting places**
[2] - - **Special events**
[10] - - **Involvement in area**
[3] - - - Constructing, building
[1] - - - Maintaining, taking care of the area
[2] - - - Restoration
[6] - - - Living in area
[2] - - - Researching & sharing history

[14] - **SUGGESTIONS FOR MANAGEMENT**
[2] - - **Maintenance, upkeep**
[10] - - **Keep the area as is, limit development**
[2] - - **Enhancements of features or areas**
[5] - - **New opportunities for access & activities**
[1] - - **Funding, finances**
[1] - - **Fairness**
[2] - - **Improve information about area**

Our job at the North Central Forest Experiment Station is discovering and creating new knowledge and technology in the field of natural resources and conveying this information to the people who can use it. As a new generation of forests emerges in our region, managers are confronted with two unique challenges: (1) Dealing with the great diversity in composition, quality, and ownership of the forests, and (2) Reconciling the conflicting demands of the people who use them. Helping the forest manager meet these challenges while protecting the environment is what research at North Central is all about.

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